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KENTUCKY

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

P.2

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Drug Free
Schools
Rep

August 21, 1990

The Honorable Thad Cochran
United States Senate
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Thad:

I have reviewed a draft report from the National Commission on Drug-Free Schools. As you well know, the scourge of drugs is an extremely serious problem in our society and eliminating drugs from our schools should be a national priority. The National Commission on Drug-Free Schools and its objectives are commendable.

I agree school age youth should not be targets for the marketing of tobacco and alcohol products. First, they are below the legal age for consumption and second, many are not mature enough to make an educated decision on responsible use of these products. However, the emphasis placed on the connection between the use of alcohol and tobacco products and illicit drug use is disturbing.

I am especially concerned about the numerous statements in this report that there is absolutely no difference between smoking cigarettes and smoking crack cocaine. I believe there is a major difference and one we must make clear to our nations' youth.

While the effects of tobacco and alcohol use are widely reported as being hazardous to one's health, I dare say their use can in any way compare to an individual's addiction to illicit drugs. Drug users find themselves lying, stealing, and ruining family life to continue their habit. Equating the use of cigarettes and beer to cocaine and heroin is confusing our kids and it is wrong.

The use of tobacco and alcohol products will continue to be legal for individuals of a certain age. The responsibility of the U.S. Government is to inform its citizens of any hazards to the use of tobacco and alcohol, it is not our job to restrict individual's freedom to use a legal product. I hope you will review the report before it is released. Emphasis should be placed on solving our nation's illegal drug problem, not misleading our children to believe tobacco and alcohol use are synonymous with illicit drug abuse.

Sincerely,

Mitch McConnell
MITCH MCCONNELL
UNITED STATES SENATOR

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